GPDE 5256A Wikis, Podcasts and Online Learning for K-12 Classrooms

St. Mary’s University GPDE 5256

Implementation Plan

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The world is changing incredibly fast. Technology is the driving force behind many changes not only locally, but through the world. Technology affects every part of our lives, and it seems as if anytime we blink there is some sort of change taking place based off technology in business, construction, legislation, communication, etc. Here is my take on how technology has affected education, and how I can use it to better my classroom, students, and professional development.

Part I:

What is a 21st Century Learner? How does technology today affect my teaching? What does it look like in a 2nd grade classroom? Where do I start? During my time in GPDE 5256A: Wikis, Podcats, and Online Learning for the K-12 Classroom I was able to find some answers to these questions.

In the beginning of this course, I felt comfortable with the use of technology and what it had to offer in my classroom. The previous semester of online learning with St. Mary’s and classroom experiences I have had over the last 5 years has made me feel comfortable with technology in my classroom. The term Web 2.0 struck my curiosity about what else was out there. Through this course, I found out how little I did know about web tools and how they could affect my classroom and me professionally.

At the beginning of the course we read “The New World of Work and Seven Survival Skills” from the Global Achievement Gap by Tony Wagner. In this chapter he speaks to the skills that 21st Century employees need to survive in our technology age. He says workers need to be effective communicators, critical thinkers, problem solvers, and be self-motivated, to name a few. For me as an educator, I need to do my best to foster a classroom that uses technology to promote the new work skills for my students. I want my students to be creators not spectators of technology. I have chosen a few web tools to implement and will use them to push my students to create, apply, and assess their learning this fall.

Part II:

The number of Web 2.0 tools available is amazing. In fact, I find it to be overwhelming to think of the innovation and creativity behind so many practical ideas. For my implementation of these tools I plan to focus on three specific tools and how they will affect my classroom, coaching, and professional development.

My transition from first to second grade is still in progress. Having a basic understanding of the developmental level of my future students is one of the cornerstones I will begin the year with. Over the first grade year, reading levels drastically change, as well as students writing abilities. I will expand second grade writing with a web tool called Storybird. The implementation of this tool will be determined on the writing curriculum and the first lesson of story writing. I would like to use this in the first quarter of the year. Knowing what first grade writing is like at the end of the year, I feel very confident that students would have the ability to complete the writing process on paper starting with a rough draft. After the rough draft is approved the students will use their Storybird account to finalize their story for viewing.

Storybird allows students to create a story using pre-designed pictures from many different artists. They can match the text to different illustrated characters with their writing. One benefit to this application is the emphasis on the writing and not on the pictures. There is no way of adding to or editing the pictures. Students will choose the best one to match the text. The final step will be to publish their story and send it to me through an email. Additionally, I would like to send it to their parents email as well.

Through the writing process they will learn about editing, revising and creating a final product to be published virtually.

Another tool I will be using is for coaching. Hudl is a web tool that allows me to view football film on my computer, iPad or smart phone. I can use this app to assess players during games by quickly selecting plays or copy and paste certain plays into a new file for players to view. In the past, film was exchanged between coaches by arranging a meeting time and place, driving to the location and then making copies for coaches and players to view. Now, Hudl allows coaches and players to view film as soon as it is uploaded to the account. It also allows players to create highlight videos to share with college recruits. I will use this on a weekly basis this fall to prepare for future opponents and assess our previous games. This planning and reflection cycle will allow our football team to be efficient with our time and resources.

The final tool I have already started to implement into my career and personal life is Twitter. The amount of information available through this tool is amazing.

Being in touch with a great educational mind like Grant Wiggins is thought provoking. I like the fact that a brief glance at a twitter feed can spark a thought about my classroom and a new idea for backward design. Following edutopia or educlipper allows me to stay connected with thousands of other educators. I have the ability to view and re-tweet the ideas I like to my page. This makes it very convenient to come back to another time.

From a coaches perspective I have been following a number of different organizations that offer opposing philosophies about the spread offense compared to traditional power offense. It is important to see the different philosophies in order to keep some balance in my own philosophies.

As a professional I have not been connected with the sort of resources Twitter offers. I see the availability of these resources will help me stay up-to-date. The key to growing my own PPLN (Powerful Professional Learning Network) is to keep it organized. If I allow it to get too cluttered and full, I will feel overwhelmed and lose interest. I have already stopped following one individual who was posting a dozen times a day. I want to feel like I can keep up, not like I am swamped.

Part III

The implementation plan for Storybird will be an on-going process. I will start with students’ basic knowledge of beginning, middle, and end. As a class, we will create a sequential story together on the Smartboard. I will show them how to log in, choosing an artist, how to select different pictures, placement of text, and how to publish and share their story. Then students will create a story of their own using the pictures of their choice, and adding text to create a sequential story. I will be focusing on the student’s creativity, sequencing, and how well they connect the writing to the illustrations. Students would have the opportunity to share their work with the class by reading the digital copy of their story from the iPad or Smartboard.

To follow up the first activity, students will create a rough draft writing assignment with editing and revising taking place with a partner. After the corrections are made, the students can create their final draft using the Storybird web tool. The focus of assessment would be on the specific writing skill, along with their connection of illustration to text.

Storybird will be convenient to use at the beginning of the year when skills are limited in creating and having a vision for matching writing to text. My intent would be to incorporate a different story application called StoryJumper as the year progresses. This app is similar to Storybird, however, it allows students to customize their own illustrations with unlimited options. This will be my tool for high achieving students that need to have more of a challenge.

The implementation of Hudl to my coaching life has already taken effect. I am reviewing the games from the previous season which allows me to have a better understanding of a new offensive philosophy, and gives me an idea of what returning players have to work on for the upcoming season. As I stated before the importance of planning for upcoming opponents is key to success on Friday nights. I will scout weekly opponents to better prepare my players for different schemes and situations. This includes reviewing film of my players to see what corrections need to be made from the previous weeks. I can then go back to other coaches and report any tendencies or corrections that need to be made for the upcoming week.

The need to stay connected in the 21st century of learning is important. I want to know what is going on in other schools across the world. Twitter will be a professional development tool for my classroom and my coaching. It allows me to be connected with the latest people in either field by looking for specific ideas about reading strategies, or what the new buzz words about technology in second grade are. The easy access to information will keep my interest in this tool. The important part for me to continue my own learning is to not get overwhelmed with too many Twitter feeds. I want quality not quantity on my feed wall. I anticipate growth for me as a learner by keeping intentional, high quality followers on Twitter.

Part IV

During my time in this course I have worked with many different tools, and organizers to make life and teaching simpler. However, I have come to realize that just teaching the “how to” of these tools is not what 21st Century Learning is about. If the 21st century teacher expects to connect with 21st century learners, they must understand how to use technology alongside content. Learning is deeper than understanding how to operate technology. Ian Jukes (2013) writes “They should be producing content, not just consuming it passively.” In other words we must embed the content into the technology.

The problem is with the educational paradigms. Jennifer Nichols (2013) of teacherthought.com writes “Society has changed. We cannot adequately prepare students for the society that exists today or will exist tomorrow, if we continue to prepare them for the society that existed yesterday. In order to prepare students to play their role in the 21st century society we are a part of.” Tony Wiggins (2010) speaks to our complacency with the old educational philosophy: “However, it has become increasingly clear to me that even in these “good” schools, students are simply not learning the skills that matter most for the twenty-first century. Our system of public education—our curricula, teaching methods, and the tests we require students to take—were created in a different century of the needs of another era. They are hopelessly outdated.” In order to survive in a global economy, he suggests “…the Seven Survival Skills are for future generations are what the “Three R’s” were for previous generations. They are the “new basic skills” for work, learning, and citizenship in the twenty-first century.” It is up to me to make sure that I am using the technology in an intentional way as teacher Sheryl Nussbaum-Beach (Post Local, 2011) stated, “Well we live in a connected world, with the internet and powerful digital technologies literally at our fingertips, so it would be foolish not to integrate those things into the learning experience. But when I talk about the shift to 21st century teaching and learning, I am not talking primarily about changing the tools we use. I’m talking about transforming the way most teachers teach today- either because they were taught to teach that way or because the accountability system makes them believe they have to teach that way.”

In my classroom, I want to use the technology to promote the critical thinking, problem solving, communication, and motivation of 21st century learners. I have come to realize that knowledge of a tool is only one part of Bloom’s Taxonomy. Will Richardson adds “Putting technology first—simply adding a layer of expensive tools on top of the traditional curriculum—does nothing to address the new needs of modern learners.”

My goal is to put the learner before technology, so that I am preparing them for a successful future, ready for change and learning, in order to be the best citizen they can be.

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